

STATE OF THE UNION.

SPEECH

OF

HON. ALEXANDER H. RICE, OF MASSACHUSETTS,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 26, 1861.

The House having under consideration the report from the select committee of thirty-three—

Mr. RICE said:

Mr. SPEAKER: The value of any discussion upon the great questions which now agitate the country will be somewhat estimated according to the spirit in which it is conducted, and the measure of faith entertained in the possibility of adjusting the existing difficulties. I have felt many impulses to participate earlier in the discussion, but have been prevented by the same necessity which, up to this time, has excluded some members of the committee whose report furnishes the propositions before us. And although I may now fail to present any considerations which shall change a vote, or conciliate an opposing opinion, yet I feel it incumbent upon me as a participator in these important scenes, and as the Representative of a constituency which might present many claims to respectful audience, to utter, for myself and for those who agree with me, a few words indicative of my own purposes, and of peace and conciliation in behalf of the noblest and best Government that the sun in all his course looks down upon.

If there were no other considerations than those which spring from the current events of these days, I might be among those who despair of the Republic; for we seem to be dissolving and separating into isolated fragments, like some fair globe which once adorned the sky and shed its benignant light throughout the universe of God; but now, riven with convulsion, is bursting into meager and telescopic stars, no longer beautifying any constellation in the firmament, and in danger of becoming lost from the observation, if not from the knowledge of mankind. We have listened to those, here and elsewhere, who talk as lightly of the value of the American Union as of a piece of merchandise, which may be produced or disposed of at pleasure. One might almost suppose the Federal Constitution, the great compact of the people, to be a convenient instrument which may be followed or violated at pleasure. And we may soon expect to hear the names of those who stand foremost in our country's fame classed among dreamy enthusiasts, or as gleaners only in the fields of political speculation. But, thank Heaven, such is not the voice of the people of the land. Amidst all the discord and apparent disintegration of the country, the great heart of the people sends forth the pulsations of patriotic blood, giving hope that the day is even yet to dawn when it shall reanimate the whole body-politic, when the members of the great confederate system shall revive under

its invigorating streams, and the glow of health and the vigor of life shall once more restore us to the normal condition of unity, fraternity, and power.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot refrain from speaking warmly for that Union which I have been taught to hold in devoted admiration from my earliest years. It was my fortune to be born upon soil near which transpired some of the principal events of the American Revolution. The home of my childhood, and of my maturer life as well, was within sight of the smoke of the conflict on Bunker Hill, in which the gallant little army of the colonies suffered a defeat, the glory of which surpassed even the victory of that day. The plains of Lexington and Concord sent their startling echoes over the very hills which have since been my familiar haunts. I have gazed at frequent intervals, all my life long, upon the effigies in marble and upon canvas of those who braved the perils and directed the counsels of these and of later struggles. I have dwelt always amidst the associations and traditions of their deeds. The walk to my daily avocations has been beside the memorials with which patriotism has sought to bestow veneration and gratitude upon their names, and I have worshiped in temples beneath and around which all but their imperishable glory and their immortal spirits sleeps in the silence and repose of death. Sir, I am not prepared to celebrate the obsequies of the nation which, under the will of Providence, the patriots founded; and those who are now engaged in the sacrilege of its destruction shall, I verily believe, after the passion of the hour has passed, live, while they continue, amidst the displeasure of earth and Heaven; and history, through all the years to come, shall render their disgrace immortal.

I said that if there were no other considerations than those derived from current events, we might almost despair of the country. There are other considerations. The instincts of men seem always to have pointed to a period when the experiment of a Government founded upon the consent of the governed should be successful; and the repeated failures which have attended such experiments hitherto, have not yet extinguished either the hope or the conviction of ultimate success. The American was founded in that hypothesis and faith. It seemed sufficient to account for the failure of antecedent republics that they had been based upon the ruins of older political systems, the relics and influence of which were necessarily intermingled with their structure and tempered their legislation. Here was a new coun-

try, with a fresh and vigorous people, where, in the establishment of a Government, the task was not so much to change and alter as to organize and create a social system. The result has for nearly eighty years stood forth as the example of a nation which has become more and more the pride and the marvel of the world. They have seen its wonderful growth in population, their enterprise, thrift, and intelligence; its development in arts, the spread of its commerce, its advancement in all the elements of high civilization, and its early attainment of the rank of one of the four greatest Powers of the earth.

In the majestic presence of the great Republic, tyrants have trembled, and kings have wielded their scepters with gentler hand. Imperial cabinets and hoary Parliaments have tempered their decrees with growing deference to the popular will. Justice has entered the royal courts, and poised her balance upon the fulcrum of civic rights; and fame—no longer the patron of privileged classes—has laid the avenues to her shining temple within the aspirations of the masses of men. And all this has been done before the Capitol of the nation is completed, and before all the companions of its peerless founder have passed from the earth.

But there was another consideration, or element, to which the founders of this Government looked for its stability, and which made it an exception to its predecessors. It was to stand upon the basis of popular intelligence and civic virtues. It was not upon its arms, or upon its industry, or upon commerce, that they depended, so much as upon these. If it falls now, what a tremendous fact will be added to the history of human governments! Its decline will send dismay into the hearts of every oppressed and struggling people upon earth, and will be everywhere accepted as the final demonstration of the incapacity of the race to govern itself; or else we must accept the humiliating alternative, that, in this nineteenth century of the Christian era—the golden period of modern times—there was not enough of virtue and intelligence among the American people to preserve a Government conceived by the wisdom and patriotism, and sealed with the blood, of their immediate ancestors. I cannot believe we have reached such national degeneracy as is thus implied.

The physical structure of the continent, and the commercial relations thereby incident to our people, all point also to a unity of Government. We compass the width of the domain from sea to sea. We have great navigable waters upon the north and upon the south; nearly all varieties of natural productions grow under the several degrees of latitude between them; while the North is bound to the South, and the South to the North, by navigable streams whose courses conform nearly to the meridians of longitude. To these physical bonds we may always add the less palpable, but even stronger, ties of community of race, of language, of religion, and of mutual interest; and we find in these all the assurance that, whatever obstacles may for the moment interrupt our peaceful union, the laws by which we are held together are stronger even than the passions of men.

There is, to be sure, Mr. Speaker, one aspect of affairs which suggests a providential interruption in the events which are now transpiring.

Every reflecting mind may not have considered the fact that these events occur at a peculiar period in our national progress; and the lesson which they are designed to teach may have a significance which is not immediately apprehended. During the existence of the Anglo-Saxon race upon this continent, they have passed through the various political stages of colonial dependence and confederate States, and are now in the relation of a General Government, superseding that Confederation. It would not be difficult to suggest providential reasons why the discovery of the continent itself was assigned to the particular period when it occurred; and something more than chance seems to have directed the remarkable incidents of the immigration by which it was settled, and the peculiar elements of which that immigration was composed. Certain it is, that nowhere else could that freedom of opinion have been attained which has here been exercised; nor the same elasticity of character have been developed, except when there was the same boundless territory inviting to enterprise and adventure. Was it, then, part of the providential design that such peculiarities of character, and a corresponding elasticity of government, should be constituted for the purpose of subjugating this continent, and opening it to the purposes and uses of the noblest civilization? And this result having now been mainly accomplished, the wilderness threaded, the mountains scaled, the savage subdued, and the oceans united by a cultivated and homogeneous race, are we preparing to enter upon a new phase of political life, in which the characteristics of discovery and expansion shall be exchanged for consolidation and discipline? A French writer of distinction has given his conception of an ideal condition of society, “in which all men would profess an equal attachment and respect for the laws of which they are the common authors; in which the authority of the State would be respected as necessary, though not as divine, and the loyalty of the subject to the Chief Magistrate would not be a passion, but a quiet and rational persuasion; where every individual, being in the possession of rights which he is sure to retain, a manly reliance and reciprocal courtesy should arise between all classes, removed alike from pride and from meanness.” Certainly the United States have already realized all, and more than this conception; and if we have at length reached one of those great transition periods which occur in the life of nations, then, indeed, the time has come when the real greatness of our Government and the strength of its institutions are to be tested; when we are to exhibit the nobility of the American people, and enter their final vindication among men; or when we are to meet the fate and fortunes of those whose weakness, or blindness, or impetuosity, shall add one more to the wrecks of empires. In view, then, of the emergency which is before us and around us, we may well summon our best powers to meet this hour of trial; to resist this demon of national discord; to cast out the influence which is alluring us to national dissolution and fratricidal war; so that, after its departure, we may survey with clearer vision this fairest heritage of the earth, and from the heights of a loyal patriotism invoke those ministrations of peace which shall consecrate afresh and forever our devotion to our native land.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the great controversy which is at present waged with such ferocity as to threaten the destruction of this Government, is assigned to the smallest causes that ever engendered a national tumult. And if the case were fully stated in the catalogue of grievances which has been presented for its justification, it would seem to require but little either of time or of ability to bring about a satisfactory settlement. It has been alleged that the election of a President by a party limited to one section of the country is justifiable cause for the people of the opposite section to dissolve their connection with the Government. If this be so, then the election of a President would seem to be a geographical problem, a question of zones and of parallels of latitude and longitude, whose heterogeneous suffrage must be blended into the unit of a successful candidate—an experiment in political alchemy too dangerous and intricate, I imagine, for common undertaking. But if it be said that the complaint is not so much a matter of locality as of certain opinions and sentiments which are predominant in certain places, then the contest is against the incorporation of those supposed peculiar opinions, or the policy founded upon them, into the administration of the General Government; and the matter of locality is, after all, of little account.

Now, the present Administration was elected by the blended suffrage of free and of slave States; and yet, in reference to certain opinions and policy upon the only question of great importance in controversy between the North and the South, it has been as thoroughly sectional as though all the suffrage which created it had laid south of Mason and Dixon's line. So true is this, that when the Democratic party assembled at Charleston to nominate new candidates for the highest offices in the Government, there was so much division of sentiment on this question that some of those who had been its loyal supporters for years, in the North, revolted in offense; and left their recent associates ultimately to nominate candidates who received not a single electoral vote outside of the slave States of the Union. And yet men who were the supporters of these candidates in the extreme South are, for the most part, those who propose to break up this Union for the alleged reason that the new President, though elected by legal and constitutional means by the people of the country, did not receive his support in accordance with a certain geographical distribution of popular opinion and suffrage. But let us suppose the President to have been chosen by one section of the country only, and that he sympathizes with the opinions which are in a great degree peculiar to that section: this is, after all, a small matter, compared with the offset proposed. The Government of the United States is designedly so constructed as to place in no one individual, and in no one department, an amount of authority or power, which, if exercised alone, could be largely destructive of the liberties and rights of the people. It is made up in the form of a system of checks and balances, in which the prerogatives and immunities of the citizen are secured on the one hand, and the restraints and regulations of law are determined and exercised by Congress, Executives, Cabinets, and courts, on the other.

It is only when all these are combined in a sin-

gle direction, and thus become independent of supervision or control, that danger and oppression and abuse are to be apprehended; when all departments of the Government, concurring in one line of policy, may become a manifold despot. All experience testifies that good faith and efficiency are promoted by the supervision and restraints of minorities; and that parties become corrupt, and the Government which they control weakened and pillaged, very much in proportion to the magnitude of their majorities and the duration of their power. It so happened that, with the election of Mr. Lincoln to the Presidency, the party which supported him had secured a majority in neither branch of Congress, and therefore his opponents need not entertain fears of his administration, even if, under other circumstances, evil might be apprehended; because the existing laws have been enacted or approved by Congresses and Presidents of opposite opinions to his own respecting the disputed question of the day, and no new laws could be reached, except through a Congress in which his friends would be the minority.

But it is not strictly true that the recent election was decided wholly upon the issue of the slavery question, as is so often stated, here and elsewhere. The people not only suspected, but had become convinced, that great corruption existed in some of the departments of the Government. The limited and hasty investigations which had been instituted, gave abundant evidence of that fact; and thousands of persons gave their votes for the successful candidate, from the conviction that it was necessary to clear away the abuses which had been so freely tolerated. The election overthrew the ascendancy of the then dominant party; but it did not institute its rival with such completeness as to render it liable to similar excesses. There was such a mingling of success and of failure in the result, as to invite watchfulness, prevent fraud, and secure vigilance in all departments of the Government; so that the new Administration, judged by any reasonable supposition, was so constituted as to render it national in tone, and conservative of the interests of the whole country.

But, besides the election of a President who did not reside within the limits of the slave States, although he was born in one of them, certain legislative acts of some of the free States are cited as being unconstitutional, and hostile to the recovery of fugitives from service in the southern States. It would seem to be sufficient to say, as has been said already, that the laws complained of must be of very little practical importance, since they have never secured the liberty of a single slave. It is also well understood that all legislation of the States must be subordinate to the Constitution of the United States; and consequently, that any law which is in conflict with that instrument is as inoperative and void as though it had never been written. It would be needless even to repeal such laws, except it be to clear the records of statutory rubbish, to remove causes of misapprehension, and to maintain that respect for the supreme law of the land which will be the desire of all patriotic people. The validity of any law of the free States may be easily determined. The Federal courts in that section are free to every citizen, come whence he may; and the judges are as incorruptible as the tri-

bunals are accessible. If any law whatever be constitutional, then it is the right of any State to enact it; and this right becomes a duty when demanded by the security and welfare of its citizens. If, on the other hand, it be unconstitutional, it is for that reason dead. It is a notable fact that the importance of the laws, known as personal liberty laws, seems to be estimated inversely in the ratio of the necessity for their existence. Thus the Gulf cotton States, which were the first to raise the rebellion which assigns these laws, in part, as its cause, or its justification, lose comparatively few slaves; and the States at the opposite extremity of the country, where fugitives seldom remain, and through whose domain they rarely pass, are those which have been among the readiest to enact them.

There is no reason that I am aware of, to doubt that the second section of the fourth article of the Constitution was designed to secure the rendition of fugitive slaves, and that it was so understood at the time of its adoption; and therefore, the States are legally and honorably bound to recognize proceedings properly instituted for that purpose. While, therefore, such is the duty of the States to conform to this obligation, that is also a reason why the Federal law, carrying the provision into effect, should not be needlessly stringent; and above all, why it should not be made specially repugnant to the feelings of the people, among whom at best its execution must be more or less odious. It is, doubtless, the right of a State to protect its citizens against the maleexecution of even Federal laws within its own jurisdiction, but its loyalty forbids that it shall interfere with their legitimate operation. The fact that some of the States in which the personal liberty laws exist have voluntarily modified or repealed them, or have instituted inquiries respecting their validity and necessity, is abundant indication that the public mind is so open to a proper understanding of the subject, and to a right decision, whatever it may be, as to destroy all occasion for a disruption of the Government on this account.

It is still further asserted that the people of the free States are imbued with certain sentiments of hostility to slavery, the logical sequence of which would lead to its entire abolition in the United States. Now, if it be objected that the people of one section of the country entertain certain opinions respecting any subject, which opinions are the result of reason and observation and conviction, then, indeed, we have a difficulty not easily removed; because that objection strikes at the foundation of all freedom, and, passing through the spheres of public and social and domestic life, invades the sanctity of the individual intellect and heart. It is an invasion, not of the right of action or of speech, but of thought, upon which no restraint, unless self-imposed, has ever been long successful; an invasion which will be submitted to only by a weak and pusillanimous people. Erroneous opinions, whose falsity can be clearly demonstrated, are comparatively harmless, because they are easily cured; and as there is a power in nature which springs into exercise for the restoration of order, whenever any of its forces are disturbed, so there is a law of opinion working through the cycles of time as inflexible as nature's king. Therefore, whatever errors of opinion prevail in consequence of the difficulty of demon-

strating their falsity, will surely be corrected by reaction, sooner or later, at the very point where they have been most common. But the apprehension felt at the South respecting the hostility of the North, and the purpose of the people of that section to interfere with slavery where it exists under legal sanction, is totally unfounded. The discussion of this subject, if attended with loss of temper and with alienation of feeling, has been productive of a better and clearer understanding of the mutual rights and obligations of the two sections of the country in respect to this institution. While the conviction almost universally prevails that slavery is an evil and, as an element in society, a weakness, for which the people of the North will not hold themselves responsible in their own section, yet it is admitted to be an institution which has legal existence in certain States of this Union, which they are bound to recognize. And the extent of this recognition is to security from interference by Congress or by the Legislature of one State with that institution in any other State where it exists by sanction of the local law. The resolution which was unanimously adopted by this House, a few days ago, on this subject, shows that there is no diversity of opinion here on this point, and I do not believe there is in the Legislatures of any of the free States.

But it is said that the danger lies not in the sentiment of opposition to slavery as at present developed, but in that form which, to use the current expression, is its logical sequence. Now, there is scarcely an opinion on any subject which has not its rational limits, beyond which it lapses into a vice or an absurdity; and almost every virtue has at some time or other been drawn out of its practical and operative sphere into the barren and useless formula of an abstraction. Thus, we are told that the natural consequence of hostility to slavery, which the northern people of this country share with nearly the whole civilized world, is the desire for its abolition everywhere; and the sequence of this desire is the attempt to accomplish that object; and this attempt is warfare upon the rights and property of the people of the South, and hence the necessity for a dissolution of the Union. On the other hand, the statement is, that slavery being "a great moral, social, and political evil," it ought not to be tolerated anywhere; but it is tolerated in a portion of the Federal Union, and in a measure sanctioned by that Union and its Constitution, through the operation of local laws; hence that Constitution is an infamous compact, and the Union a league with powers of evil, which ought to be dissolved; and thus the theory of logical sequence, applied in opposite directions to this vexed question of slavery, takes us to precisely the same result; and hence, too, it is that at this very day the violent champions of slavery on the one hand, and the violent Abolitionists on the other, meet in unhallowed fellowship to destroy this Union, which the loyal and patriotic citizens of all sections are striving to maintain.

It is, indeed, not to be wondered at that excitement and apprehension prevail at the South, if the people of that section believe it to be the purpose of the Republican party to make forays upon their towns, incite servile insurrections, and imperil the lives of those who are dearest to them on earth.

Examples of the most imaginary nature are held up as representatives of northern sentiment; and the expressions of men, whose well known ultraisms long since rendered their opinions powerless at home, are disseminated as the current and accepted discussion of the relations of the two sections of the country; while the foray of John Brown, who, after the labor of years, found, in the United States and Canada, twenty men willing to join a piratical expedition against one of the States of this Union, is promulgated as the legitimate fruit of the intellectual and religious training of the whole body of the northern people. But who is to be blamed for all this misrepresentation, when neither northern men nor the northern press, generally, is allowed to bear the contradiction and the evidence to their doors? Strong and general as is popular disapproval of slavery in the free States, I do not believe it is much, if any, stronger now than it was ten or fifteen years ago.

The resolutions of the conventions of the dominant party in the country are not more stringent or decisive than those of the Whig party were within the time alluded to; nor do the most distinguished men of the Republican party to-day give it stronger opposition than did Mr. Webster and Mr. Clay. The Whig party had contended for the constitutional rights of freemen, and the limitation of slavery, until the controversy was supposed to be virtually ended in the compromise measures of 1850. The dominant party in the country to-day contends for nothing more.

But, sir, the difficulty which at present surrounds us is deeper than the causes which are publicly assigned; and, as the conspirators grow bolder, they become more frank in their avowals. It is not that Mr. Lincoln has been elected, not that the question of slavery is discussed, not that its emancipation in the States where it exists is apprehended—for they know that is impossible so long as the Constitution and the Union are preserved—but it is that two systems of civilization are brought into contrast upon this continent; and that one of these systems is supposed to suffer from the other, to which it nevertheless contributes the means of superior success. The distinguishing difference between them is, that, under one system, there is a union of labor and capital in the conduct of its enterprises without disparity in the prerogatives of citizenship among its population; and that, under the other system, capital owns the labor and dictates the character and amount of its social and political privileges. Out of these different relations may be traced, respectively, the tendencies towards the perpetuation of a Republic, and towards the establishment of a Government essentially aristocratic or monarchical. The peculiarities of soil and climate have favored pursuits in which this distinction may be obtained; and the growing alienation of the people of the two sections, arising from an interruption of cordial and confidential intercourse and association, and from contest for control of the unoccupied territory of the country, has obscured the immense advantages which accrue from a common Government.

In the midst of this unnatural isolation, the seeds of separation, planted in an unhappy hour by an able but always disloyal statesman, have germinated and are budding for their legitimate fruit. The dreamy and sunlit glories of a south-

ern confederacy, in which the principles which he promulgated and the policy which he foreshadowed are promised realization, now entrance the gaze and bewilder the patriotism of a portion of our fellow-countrymen; while the herald of an untried and perhaps blood-stained future summons others still to its desperate embrace.

But another of the chief causes of the present disaffection in the cotton States is the arrogance engendered by an excessive estimate of their importance in relation to the markets of the world. "Cotton is king," has become the watchword and the accepted conclusion of the people of that section, and they have also grown into the belief that while the throne of this textile sovereign is based upon a narrow belt of States above the Gulf of Mexico, his empire is the world; and that his scepter can sway the destinies of commerce and manufactures, and finally of races, and regulate the opinions of men. The vast importance of cotton to the commerce and industry of the world need not and cannot be questioned. But, however great, it is insufficient, as is any other single product, for the support of a civilized nation.

One of the grand mistakes which I apprehend would be discovered in the proposed cotton confederacy, is forgetfulness that a diversity of employments is essential to national development and national wealth; and that this diversity is incompatible with but a single product, or with several products, provided they require labor of but a single grade. A significant example of this fact is found in the difference between the free and the slave States of this Union; and especially between the States of Massachusetts and South Carolina, two among the oldest of the number. Nature has bestowed upon the latter superior advantages of soil and climate, and yet, in material prosperity and population, she is among the slowest States in progress; while the former, with natural disadvantages, supports a larger population to the square mile, well fed, clothed, and educated, than any other State, and has also a larger amount of wealth in proportion to her population, a large share of which has been derived from her diversified industry. This diversity is compatible only with a considerable degree of education and discipline on the part of the laborers themselves. Without this the arts cannot flourish, and their products will always present the contrast of crude and unskillful experiments. Those who are more familiar with the characteristics of slave population than I am, can better tell how far it is consistent with security and subordination to educate them; but all can judge how far the African can compete with the white laborer in the competitions of mechanical industry extensively prosecuted.

It is true that we have heard suggested as an alternative to this education and employment of the blacks an invitation to colonies of northern mechanics to settle in the South under inducements of larger profits and constant employment; and I remember that the newspapers, about a year ago, furnished accounts of such invitations from the extreme South to certain bodies of mechanics then temporarily out of employment in Massachusetts. But the progress of emancipation in the States which have become free has been tolerably commensurate with the introduction of free labor; and I do not know why this should not still con-

tinue to be so. Besides, if the evil or danger of living under a common Government with the northern people, though separated from them by long distances, is so great as to be sufficient cause for the destruction of the Government and a dissolution of the Union, it is not apparent how that evil will be abated, or that danger removed, by importing a sufficient number of those people to make up the diversity of industrial employments, which is essential to the vigorous growth of States. But furthermore, Mr. Speaker, there is a proverb made trite by frequent illustration, which says that "whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad." And to entertain the idea, in this age, that the exchanges of the world and its industry can be indefinitely controlled, by monopolizing within a small space a product which will grow upon one quarter or one third of the earth's surface, is surely an approximation to the hint of the proverb. Why, sir, the "world's exhibitions," as they are termed, showed that the inventive genius of the age is unparalleled, and we see the practical evidences of the fact on every hand; and if there be one characteristic in which the people of the northern States proverbially excel, it is a wonderful sagacity in the discovery of expedients to overcome difficulties.

It singularly happens that two or three incidents occur at this juncture of affairs which are likely to affect the progress of the confederacy of cotton States which is foreshadowed.

1. The divergence of the flow of cotton from the southern commercial cities to the inland railroad routes, to which it is forced by the interruption of southern ports, and the development of the fact that this mode of communication and transport presents special advantages of speed, safety, and probably of economy; which considerations are likely to render the employment of these routes permanent after the present necessity for their use has been withdrawn. Should this be so, the effect upon the points alluded to must be very unfavorable, especially as the return freights will be likely to follow the same lines of travel and in the same vehicles.

2. As to the supply of cotton. England, if I mistake not, obtains about thirty per cent. of her supply from India; and the quantity from that source is likely to increase, rather than diminish, in the ratio of her future consumption; the balance she gets from various sources, but chiefly from the United States. Recent discoveries in Africa indicate the adaptability of an immense tract of country to cotton culture, surrounded and overrun with labor suited to that purpose; and English enterprise has already commenced its occupation. We have also accounts of influences at work in Turkey, through which that ancient country, reputed now to grow thirty-five to forty million pounds of cotton annually, will immensely increase her production. Egypt, Brazil, Peru, Mexico, and the West Indies, are also growing competitors. Two of our countrymen who have enjoyed opportunities for extensive observation in Central America, have recently given to the public statements showing the complete facilities for cotton culture in the region lying at the foot of our continent, and the peculiar inducements for its prosecution. Measures have already been initiated for the organization of enterprises of a peaceful nature, to be sustained by associated capital, which shall undertake this

business. The land may be obtained at small cost, the local governments favor the enterprise, and the desideratum of cheap labor may be considered to be substantially supplied by the local population and the opening of voluntary emigration from China to California, and elsewhere, and which would undoubtedly be attracted to this new field. Here are already resources sufficient to supply the world with cotton; and the reason why they have not been earlier considered and developed is because the regular sources of supply from the cotton States have not been materially interrupted. Much less than the enterprise and capital which have been expended on northern railroads or northern factories would render the cultivation of cotton in these new fields abundantly successful, and the supply inexhaustible.

3. There is a new rival to King Cotton himself, of different, but possibly of formidable lineage. During several years past, various experiments have been made for obtaining a substitute for cotton from flax; and, since the idea of compulsory terms for a supply of cotton from the southern States has been promulgated, the result of these experiments has been brought more conspicuously into notice.

I have before me a specimen of flax cotton, forwarded to me within a week past by an extensive merchant, residing in the district which I have the honor to represent. The specimen was accompanied by a letter, which says that this article can be produced and delivered in Boston at seven and a half cents per pound, it being grown in the free States. Two million pounds of this article will be manufactured during the present year, the letter proceeds to say; and the quantity can be extended indefinitely. I do not know how universally adapted to use this cotton is, and I am aware that two million pounds is not an alarming quantity. But if this article is only adapted to the commonest purposes, and if we remember, also, how recent is the time when the United States altogether did not produce two million pounds of cotton, this may be esteemed a competitor not to be despised. With all these facts before them, and many others, which this occasion does not permit me to mention, it appears to me that, if there be any portion of the American people who are in danger of mistaking their commercial importance, and which needs that alliance and protection which is found in a great Power like the undivided Union, that portion is the cotton States.

As the cause of the existing difficulties is mistaken or insufficient, so is the remedy resorted to unjustifiable and treasonable. It is an attempt, under the guise of a plausible and inoffensive phrase, to break engagements solemnly made at home and abroad; to destroy the Government which the disaffected can no longer control; and to precipitate the country into revolution, regardless of the rights of those whose fealty is unbroken, and reckless of the happiness of the young and of millions yet unborn, to whom this glorious Union belongs as their rightful heritage. Why will any deceive themselves with the change of name, when the startling fact of rebellion or of revolution is everywhere visible—States passing what are tenderly called ordinances of secession; declaring themselves independent of a Government whose responsibilities they have jointly created; seizing the public forts and arsenals and

navy-yards and custom-houses and treasuries; setting at defiance the Federal authority, and firing upon the national flag. Sir, if there be depths of humiliation to which an American citizen can descend, more profound than the disgust which he feels at the imbecility or treachery of those whose early and decisive action might have prevented these atrocious deeds, it was found in the experience of a gallant young officer attached to the naval station at Pensacola, and whose cheek burned with mingled shame and indignation as he told the fact that the stars and stripes, which had so often kindled his ambition, and beneath which he had stood in the conscious pride of a citizen of a free and mighty nation, ignominiously fell by rebellious hands in the very presence of a foreign man-of-war. Secession is not a dissolution of a partnership of States; it is rebellion against the Government of the country, as has been most forcibly presented by that stern and vigorous patriot who dealt successfully with secession thirty years ago. Says General Jackson:

"The Constitution of the United States forms a *Govern-
ment*, not a league; and whether it be formed by compact
between the States, or in any other manner, its character
is the same. It is a *Government* in which all the people are
represented, which operates directly on the people individ-
ually, not upon the States; they retained all the power they
did not grant. But each State having expressly parted with
so many powers as to constitute jointly with the other
States a single nation, cannot, from that period, possess any
right to secede, because such secession does not break a
league, but destroys the unity of a nation; and any injury
to that unity is not only a breach which would result from
the contravention of a compact, but it is an offense against
the whole Union. To say that any State may secede at
pleasure from the Union, is to say that the United States are
not a nation; because it would be a solecism to contend that
any part of a nation might dissolve its connection with the
other parts to their injury or ruin, without committing any
offense. Secession, like any other revolutionary act, may
be morally justified by the extremity of oppression; but to
call it a constitutional right is confounding the meaning of
terms."

Sir, there is not an American citizen who could endure the insults and atrocities which have been heaped upon his country by the seceding States if they had proceeded from a foreign Power.

The Government has submitted to these wrongs and indignities, and still stands waiting and appalled before this gigantic rebellion. The execution of the laws has been discussed in the aspect of coercing States, and the seizure of Federal property by revolutionary States, as the resumption of their undelegated rights; and all the while we have been apparently drifting towards worse results. The *prestige* of the Government abroad, as well as at home, is almost gone; its credit broken; its power questioned. The business of the country is becoming paralyzed; our ships idle; our industry hushed; and all this because of the madness of a few men, who are bent upon the policy of rule or ruin. Nor are the evils which flow from this great conspiracy limited to national disgrace and national calamity, but they permeate all orders of society, and demoralize the whole sentiment of obedience, and all love of order. The example of stupendous crimes and misdemeanors on the part of States, and of some in Federal authority, have corrupted the public conscience, and prepared it for the toleration of every species of wrong. In places where honor dwelt, treason boldly stalks, and shame flaps its filthy garments, and displays its pilfered, or meretricious charms. Instead of appeals to executives and tribunals for

redress of grievances, anarchy is introduced to drown the voice of justice, and mobs are invoked to anticipate with swifter vengeance the deliberate processes of law. It is but a single step further to the revolver and the stiletto, as the accepted and accustomed arbitrators and avengers of individual wrongs.

And now, Mr. Speaker, are there any means by which these evils, public and private, may be overcome, and order be composed in their stead? Such an undertaking, as I have already intimated, will demand the best powers of the nation, but it is not altogether hopeless. I understand full well the feelings of those who, smarting under a sense of indignation and injustice, refuse to accede to any measures which seem to them like an atonement for wrongs which have never been committed, and who believe that the voices of living men, and the silent but unequivocal testimony of history, will alike declare that, in the prolonged controversy which has been waged, the North has had the unequal task of bearing up against hostile opinion supported by the whole power of the *Govern-
ment*, which for half a century, with small interruptions, has been its constant auxiliary. I can applaud with honest sympathy the spirit which refuses to bow to the domination of its peers, or to negotiate for peace with those who appear in the panoply of rebellious arms. Something in the way of indulgence may also be granted to the pride of a great party in the flush of its triumph, and disposed to wear its laurels with comeliness, save when its submission is impudently demanded. But let it be remembered that those who have gone out of the Union, and now stand in the attitude of hostility to its *Govern-
ment* and to its people, seek no terms of reconciliation. Their purposes, no longer aided by the resources of the Union, are no longer disguised under the form of grievances seeking for redress.

It is but a few days since one of the Representatives of the State of Louisiana, in his valedictory remarks, upon retiring from this Hall, said it was his belief, that if the most conciliatory propositions now before the House were adopted, that would not stop the progress of secession in the section of country from whence he came. The declaration of Mr. Yancey, in his recent speech before the State convention of Alabama, is still more uncompromising and decisive. He said:

"I avow myself as utterly, unalterably, opposed to any and all plans of reconstructing a Union with the Black Republican States of the North. No new guarantees, no amendments of the Constitution, no peaceful resolutions, no repeal of offensive laws, can offer me any, the least, inducement to reconstruct our relations with the non-slaveholding States."

This much, then, at least, is settled; we need not seek for terms of reconciliation with those who decline, beforehand, any appeal which could be submitted, and who have chosen for themselves the attitude of implacable enemies of the *Govern-
ment* and the Union. But, sir, there are those who have assumed no such attitude, and yet who, from personal apprehension, or from the necessity of their position, look to those who desire to preserve the *Govern-
ment* for some consideration of their position; and I have heard, not without emotion, the patriotic appeals of those gentlemen from the border States who have spoken so nobly and so ably for the preservation of the Union. Their words have fallen upon the country like

the voice of Providence interposing to stay the tide of rebellion and to avert the horrors of intestine war.

And I felt a fresh hope for the continuance of the Union when I heard my distinguished colleague the other day, under circumstances which exemplified and tested his statesmanship, make his patriotic response to those appeals. We may well seek for consistent effort and fellowship with those who have been as loyal to the Union as ourselves, and who have never approached us with maledictions or threats, to join again as our fathers joined, to preserve that Union which they toiled and died to create; and for myself, I feel it to be my duty, without the sacrifice of essential principles, to pay some heed to the exigencies and necessities of the present and the future, as well as to any shibboleths of the past. And I believe the generous constituency which sent me here, not as a politician or as a partisan more than as a citizen, and by a various suffrage, will justify me, amidst these unexpected embarrassments, in the exercise of that independence which is requisite to insure the guidance of my own judgment. If otherwise, then, much as I might regret the loss of their concurrence, I cannot decline the responsibility of doing that which patriotism and duty demand of me. I am not prepared to sacrifice any principle which seems to me essential to the right position of the incoming Administration. Having contributed in a humble degree to its inception, I expect to do whatever I may to promote its continued success. But may not some of the weapons of aggressive warfare be laid aside after the citadel is taken, and those be brought into action which are adapted to its security and defense? Viewed from a political stand-point, the rallying principle of a party is valuable to it chiefly to that degree in which it may be administered when that party is successful. Licentiousness may be but an excess of liberty and superstition of faith. May not men of all parties pause, then, and see to it that in our contests to settle the doctrine of civil freedom we do not blot out from the earth its fairest and most hopeful and most puissant example?

If they will restore peace to the country, or satisfy our friends in the border States, as I think they ought to do, I am willing to support, in the main, the propositions of the committee, the principal features of which are, the constitutional amendment and the enabling act for New Mexico, proposed by my colleague; or, if it may be deemed more satisfactory, a convention of the people, legitimately called, to which the subject in controversy may be referred. But I cannot vote for measures which, in my belief, would secure only a temporary lull of excitement, with the probability of bringing back an aggravation of evils at no distant day. The Union is too great a prize to be staked at every presidential election. The question of its preservation, in spite of the existing causes of discontent, should be definitively settled now. If possible, it should be so settled as to restore that ancient harmony and fellowship among the States, which would be a bond of Union stronger than statutes or compromises or constitutions.

In addition to the noble words which have been spoken here and elsewhere by patriotic men from the border States, several of those States have spoken for themselves in unmistakable terms. Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri have done so; and Virginia, mother of States and of Presidents, has spoken with the great voice of her people, proclaiming that the remains of him to whose tomb strangers from every land make pilgrimage, and at the mention of whose name every American heart swells with mingled reverence and gratitude, shall still sleep in the soil of that Union which has rendered the glory of his name imperishable. Massachusetts, which holds in her bosom the ashes of his great compeer—that Massachusetts which poured out her treasure like sand, and her blood like water, in the days of common peril, and whose valiant sons sleep in the soil of every State, from Maine to Georgia—will hail with joy the steadfast loyalty of her ancient friend.

Mr. Speaker, in the failure of a peaceful adjustment of the existing troubles, we have been told the dread alternative is war. Already have our ears become accustomed to that sound; some speak of it as possible, and others even as propable, and speculate upon its duration and picture its horrors. More than once have we heard how valiant and relentless will be the contest on the part of those who have already left, or who design to leave, the Union. I have no wish to say a word in retaliation; but let me cite the language of Mr. Clay, uttered a little more than ten years ago, upon the characteristics of such a war. He said:

"If, unhappily, we should be involved in war—a civil war—between the two parts of this Confederacy, in which the efforts upon the one side should be to restrain the introduction of slavery into new Territories, and upon the other, to force its introduction there, what a spectacle should we present to the astonishment of mankind, in an effort, not to propagate rights, but—I must say, though I trust it will be understood to be said with no design to excite feeling—a war to propagate wrongs in the Territories thus acquired from Mexico. It would be a war in which we should have no sympathies, no good wishes; in which all mankind would be against us; in which our own history itself would be against us."

Even in such a war as that, sir, I will not doubt the valor of any of our countrymen; I will not impugn the courage of any portion of the American people. But I mean no threat when I say, that it should be remembered that this manly virtue is not limited to either section. Those who scoff at Puritan blood should trace the history of those who have come of it. If it be cold and not easily roused, when roused it does not so easily subside. It has overflowed its earlier landmarks, and gone mingling with the sturdy races which people the mighty West; it has sent not a small element into the gallant South; and wherever found, it will be folly to count upon its weakness. The same qualities which would make a civil war terrible among our countrymen, are those most valuable in the conservation of a steadfast peace. To this end, therefore, let our present counsels be aimed, and our efforts directed, and only after reason has failed, and conciliation trenches upon justice, let us think of an alternative which shall fill our land with mourning, and its rivers with blood.

